

that the resulting condition must have profoundly affected the dietetic habits of the animal is obvious, the animal not only being deprived of the important cutting function of the teeth, but also having to encounter great mechanical inconvenience in biting and mastication: this is the explanation of its emaciated appearance.

PAUNGDE, BURMA.

R. L. SONI,

February 23, 1935.

M.B., B.S.

[The specimen has since been submitted to Sir Frank Collyer, Royal College of Surgeons, London, whose report is awaited.—Eds.]

IX.—BIRTH OF AN ELEPHANT CALF (*ELEPHAS MAXIMUS* LINN.).

During a shooting trip at the end of last year, at Christmas, my friend Mr. N. H. Dendy of Tillicoultry Estate, Lindula, came across something so unusual and interesting that I think it should be recorded in the *Journal*.

Mr. Dendy was camped near the Menik Ganga, the river, one of the natural boundaries of the Yala Wild Life Sanctuary, soon to be declared the first Strict Natural Reserve in Southern Province, Ceylon. One morning quite early Mr. Dendy and his men walking along the high river bank, disturbed and watched a cow elephant and her calf.

After about half an hour the mother and calf moved away slowly into the dense forest along the river. The men remarked that the calf could not possibly be much older than a day or two. They had never seen so small a calf.

Going further, something red on the sands drew their attention and going down to look, they found the perfectly fresh placenta of the elephant. Knowing the elephant's habits, this must be a most rare experience and it would be of interest to know if this has ever been recorded before. It was early in the morning so the sun was not high enough up yet to shine and dry it. A certain proof the elephant had calved that night or even, and I think more likely, only a few hours before the party reached the place. It is known that an elephant calf is able to get up and follow the mother about two hours after birth, while various authorities state that the elephant eats the placenta.

At any rate it must be extremely rare to find it, as the sun would soon dry it up, if jackals, crocodile, etc. had not made away with it. The very exceptional drought this poor country has suffered from so severely, no doubt made the elephant choose this unusual place for the calving, knowing that the pools left in the river, were the only water she could get within miles. As a rule the elephant mother chooses the most dense cover she can find, which is all the more reason few, if any, have ever come across so remarkable a find in the jungles and wilds.

In the sand, Mr. Dendy and his men could see clearly the place she had laid down to give birth.

Mr. Dendy estimates the total weight of the placenta at about 5 to 6 lbs. The far side, darkly coloured, consisted more or less of solid flesh, the lighter coloured and a small patch on the right, was like frothy blood. Much to the surprise of Mr. Dendy, after some hesitation, the excited men asked if they might take it, they explained that when washed and dried, the solid part would make a very valuable and excellent medicine. It is said that a small bit of the dried substance, dissolved in a little lime juice and water, will at once relieve a woman's labour pains, or will help to advance an overdue confinement.

All folklore is of great interest, but considering the so great rareness of ever finding the placenta of a wild elephant, this bit of jungle lore is all the more unique.

Both men, as well as others who have spent their lifetime as watchers in the sanctuary and the neighbouring reserve, had never seen the placenta and knew of no one who ever had. The two men with Mr. Dendy had never come across the calving place of an elephant, a very rare thing to find. And yet, handed down for generations, they one and all knew the story of this most valuable medicine.

It was not quite clear from the impressions in the sand, to be quite certain about the position the cow elephant had occupied, but in all probability she must have been lying on her right side, her back turned towards the place where the men are standing.

In this connection it is of interest to remember the photograph of a cow elephant which died in calving, published in 'Kill, or be killed', by Major W. Robert Foran. This photo clearly shows the animal lying in the kneeling position. I have not been able to find any authority who describes the true position the elephant calves.

It would be of interest to know if any one has ever come across so rare and unusual a find as described above.

WEST HAPUTALE,

OHIYA, CEYLON.

A. C. TUTEIN-NOLTHENIUS.

April 9, 1935.

[G. H. Evans in his work on *Elephants and Their Diseases* describes the birth of an elephant calf on information obtained from an experienced Burman—'When about to give birth the female seeks soft ground. The calf may be presented head and fore feet or the hinder parts may appear first. If the membranes are not ruptured by an attendant, the female does so with her foot. The young one lies from one to two hours after birth, occasionally moving ears, trunk, limbs, after which it gets on its legs and can walk. Elephants even in the wild state may die in labour—the author records an instance. A newly born calf can walk well enough after a few days to follow the mother on a short march, and in the wild state, when a calf has been dropped, the herd remains in the vicinity until it is able to follow the mother; which is generally in about 48 hours. The author is of opinion that the 'after birth' is usually eaten. It comes away 15 or 20 minutes after the birth of the calf.—Eds.]